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REMARKS

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ON THE

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Temper of the Present Times.

ADDRESSED

TO THE

GENTLEMEN, YEOMANRY, AND
COMMON PEOPLE.

By a CLERGYMAN of SUFFOLK.



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THESE short remarks are not the production of a recluse or speculative writer: the author of them has been much in the society of Gentlemen of the first Landed Interest in the County; he has lived for many years on the fairest terms of friendship and acquaintance with the Yeomanry and respectable Farmers in his neighbourhood; whilst the duties of his profession have led him in the whole course of his ministry to familiar conversation with the lower orders of the people. From this general acquaintance (and he thinks with reason), he presumes to have some knowledge of their general sentiments; should he be thought to dwell too much on the subject of Tythes, he has but this reason to offer for it, viz. that he has observed very many complaints on this head made and given out, more for the sake of a popular pretext for complaining, than

*from real objections to the establishment itself:**
inasmuch that what is almost, if not altogether
foreign to them, seems now to be a leading cause
in the present discontents. Should his remarks
in any degree lessen the prejudices he conceives to
be unreasonable, or check the progress of those
opinions, which he is persuaded are dangerous
and ill founded, the design of his publication is
fully answered.

* An inflammatory paper lately dropped in a country village in this county, confirms the truth of this observation. It is written in the language and pretends to convey the sentiments of the *Labourers*, and under this character cries out *No Clergy*. Now this description of men are no ways affected by the payment of Tythes in any mode, but I believe I may say would feel a very sensible loss in the munificence of the Clergy, were the Order or their incomes abolished; for perhaps there is no rank of men who contribute more to the support of the poor in proportion to their abilities.



R E M A R K S,

&c.

NO man who wishes well to the welfare and prosperity of this country will be sorry to see any arguments offered, which may tend to quiet the minds of the people, and put them upon sober and serious reflection : such arguments are particularly needful in these turbulent times, when such unwearied pains are taken to inflame their passions, and, to instill new and corrupt opinions of the most dangerous influence : these are now spread far and wide, have passed all bounds, and if not seasonably checked, cannot fail to bring ruin and destruction upon that happy Constitution which we now enjoy by a due execution of its laws. Such opinions, to our misfortune, are industriously circulated by the intrigues of evil minded men ; but let us beware how we make ourselves the instruments of their illegal and am-

bitious views, lest we depart from the principles of common justice and policy, so plainly marked out to us by our forefathers, that, *he who runs may read.*

WE cannot fail to observe how easily the generality of mankind are misled, even to act against their own interest, and though they have the capacity, will not be at the trouble to seek truth, or make proper enquiries into the principles of it; we have a striking instance of this now before our eyes, respecting the property of Tythes and the mode of paying them, which is now become a topic both of public and private discussion. I dare say many join in the cry against them, with the very best intentions, and, as they imagine, with justice on their side. The truth is, they are tempted with a view of immediate profit and advantage to themselves, but never reflect on the consequences which are likely to follow, or whether the principles they go upon are right or wrong. When they are told that their lands in future shall pay little or no tythes, it is a tempting bait, and very likely to allure; indeed a man must be endued with a great stock of virtue

as well as of good sense and judgment to withstand it.

BUT under all these difficulties, I do not despair of convincing a numerous, intelligent and respectable body of men, (I mean the *Yeomanry* and *Occupiers* of lands in this kingdom) that the payment of tythes cannot be settled in any mode where their interest will be less injured, or, in fact, any means devised by which they will receive more benefit than by the present. Can they be so mistaken themselves, or be so deceived by others, as to imagine that if the Clergy were to be deprived of their dues, the least advantage would accrue to them, or any proportion of the emolument fall to their share?---most certainly it would not: for the landlord would then of course step between; would pay no regard to what the Clergyman had received or the Tenant formerly paid, but would immediately examine the real value of the tythe, and raise it to the full encreased rent the estate would allow of. That this would be the event must be obvious to common sense, so that by avoiding one rock they must inevitably split upon another. I will defy the

Tenants and Occupiers of lands in this country, to lay their hands upon their hearts, and say, that they are aggrieved, as a Body, or oppressed by a rigorous exaction of tythes. From their nature and extent, the payment of them must in some instances fall heavy, in some perhaps it may even be oppressive, but it must be confessed that very few complaints upon this head are justly chargeable upon the *Clergy*. Facts will speak for themselves, and relying on these only, I will venture to affirm, that the compositions made and taken in this County are so far below the real value of the tythes compounded for, that every enquiry into the subject, would very much redound to the credit of the Clergy, would shew their lenity and forbearance, and infallibly convince the Occupiers of lands that it is *their* interest to content themselves with the present mode of payment.

WE daily hear and read assertions equally void of truth, that the contentions and disputes among the Clergy and Farmers are innumerable; and, with the tears of a crocodile, they then lament the great mischiefs these differences occasion to the cause of religion and the peace of

society: this I also deny from experience. It is the temper of mankind to complain without proper and substantial reasons, especially where interest is at stake. This is one general reason given by the moderate declaimers for altering the present mode of collecting tythes. Now if it is a good one, the same reason holds why the Landlord should lower his rent, for Tenants equally complain of him and his exactions. The truth is, little heart-burnings will arise between man and man in all money transactions, and a degree of tenaciousness is generally to be observed on both sides; but yet I will affirm, that it does not commonly fall to the share of any individual, to have more respect paid, or more regard willingly shewn him by his neighbours, than the Clergyman enjoys when he conducts himself consistently amongst them. They then look up to him as their true friend, and repose a confidence in his judgment and good intentions towards them; they ask and accept his advice; they appeal to him in their quarrels and disputes; and in this character, he composes their differences and heals their wounds. By these means, he

has it in his power to add to their peace, and, of course, their happiness; and generally speaking, they have the good sense and gratitude to feel and acknowledge it. I verily believe, that, so far from settled contentions existing in general between the parties, upon the most minute enquiry, the very contrary would appear; and that the Clergy in their respective parishes possess the hearts of their neighbours in a greater degree, and with more cordial affection, than falls to the share of any other rank or order of men.

I now beg leave to address myself to the *Gentlemen of the Landed Interest*; to them it is a matter of the highest importance, and surely therefore it behoves them to weigh the subject well in their own minds, and before they adopt any plan of innovation, however promising, seriously consider whether the remedy might not prove worse than the disease complained of. In the Reform of Tythes (as it is called) many consequences might and probably would ensue, of a much more serious concern than I have hitherto observed; I therefore repeat, that Gentlemen of landed property ought care-

fully to examine, and with a jealous eye explore every circumstance that can possibly arise, before they lend their hearts or their hands to a measure which requires the most consummate judgment and good temper to deliberate and decide upon. A measure of such magnitude, that much more may depend upon it, and, perhaps, much more is involved in the question than they may be aware of.

THEY should first of all reflect that no property is better secured, or more firmly established by the laws of this country than that of TYTHES. I will not attempt to defend this right upon the authority of divine appointment, as it would probably carry little or no weight with it; or we might even be told such a right was Antichristian, and ought on that account to be abolished: but I will appeal at once to the laws of my country, by which it cannot be denied that the tenth, as it is now and has for centuries been paid, is as firmly secured to the benefit of the *Clergy*, and is as much their unalienable property, as the other parts of estates are secured to their owners, by all their Title-deeds, and other modes of

conveyance whatever. It should be further considered, that they never purchased the portion belonging to the church in their original contract or agreement, nor indeed could they possibly do it, where the property was subject to the payment of Tythes.

It would also be prudent in Gentlemen of the landed interest, to enquire by what authority any proposed alteration in the payment of tythes should be enforced; it will then appear to them, that nothing but an Act of the Legislature solemnly passed with the consent of King, Lords and Commons can effect it. An act, by which they shall please to convey the revenues now legally vested in the church, into different hands and for different purposes. Few, I believe, will publicly avow their intention to go these lengths; but it is well known these are the secret sentiments of many, nor will it be their own fault if they do not accomplish their design. I would not presume to dispute such a power of the Legislature, but must think that such an exertion of it would be a most dangerous expedient, and what would render property of every kind precarious and

insecure, and of course lessen its value. But I never can believe (except in times of total anarchy and great popular commotions), that the just rights of any body of men, or even of an individual, would be so violently sacrificed. I should tremble for the event : for if any permanent and legal property can and may be conveyed from the present owner in one instance, it may be done in all. But for our comfort, all property in this country is so secured that no part of what a man justly possesses can be taken from him ; he is protected in it by the laws, whose irresistible power nothing can or ought to oppose : the arm of Justice is strong, on this we rest our security, and without this reliance, there would be an end of property and our boasted liberties at once.

AMONGST other complaints against them, Tythes are called oppressive, because they encrease with the improvements made in husbandry. Now in common equity, and in common with other kinds of property, why should they not ? have not the Proprietors raised their Estates upon the same principles, and with like reason ? has not the value of land from a general spirit for agriculture, encreased of late

years almost beyond belief, and the rent rolls of the Laity advanced in the same proportion? Add to this the encreased expence upon commodities in general, and what would have been the present fate of the Clergy, had their revenues been unalterably fixed about forty, or, I may even say, twenty years ago? Their prospect would literally have been this, they would have seen the hills smile with plentifulness, and the vallies sing with joy; their neighbours' barns well filled with all manner of store; but in their own habitation, poverty and need rendered still more intolerable by their natural consequent neglect. No true friend to the interest of religion, or of this country, would wish to see the Clergy in this humiliating situation.

WHATEVER may be the follies and indiscretions of Individuals amongst them, it must be allowed that the Clergy as a Body of men, do greatly contribute to the advancement of virtue and religion, both by doctrine and example. Once take away the rewards which are due, and have chearfully been given to the advancement of learning and the cultivation of the minds and manners of men; once deprive them of those advantages which are fairly expected from

all laudable exertions; and you will soon see the Church fall into decay: you will hear the services of it literally read in the vulgar tongue, by men of the lowest orders of the people; and perhaps your places of worship may be seen appropriated to work-shops, for six days out of the seven! A fine triumph this to the enemies of our Church, who see its prosperity with a jealous eye, and would rejoice in the impending ruin from the removal of its corner stone. Men of the same liberal education and endowments with the Clergy themselves may not stand in need of their instruction; but with the lower ranks of the people, which are far the greaterest number, it is otherwise. They must necessarily apply to them for knowledge of their duty; and once take away the restraints which religion lays upon their minds, and the fear of God from before their eyes, and you will soon see *confusion and every evil work.*

OUR Constitution being thus founded, and the properties of both Laity and Clergy thus secured, let us take the greatest care not to proceed one step in any intended reform without acquainting ourselves with the true principles of it; and examining the grounds on which we

are going to step. As good Architects, we should search to the very foundation, and if we discover any decay or weakness in it, use our honest endeavours to repair and strengthen it, especially as our enemies act a contrary part. They are ever willing, and spare no pains to discover the weak parts of our Constitution; but it is with the dark design of discovering where they shall most effectually aim the blow that shall bring it to the ground, “so that one stone shall not be left upon another.”

IN all kingdoms murmurs and discontents will arise, and will particularly circulate in this, where every one is allowed to communicate his sentiments with freedom on public concerns. This freedom is certainly productive of the best of consequences, and no restraint should be laid upon it, unless made use of as an engine for bad purposes or dangerous designs. When abuses take place they deserve correction, and when plans of improvement are offered they ought to be attended to, and better laws and regulations (if they appear such) should be substituted in the room of former ones: but at this time, there are many dangerous and novel opinions springing up and spreading themselves

respecting the Constitution of this Kingdom, (hitherto the envy of Foreigners and the boast of its own Countrymen), which demand the diligence and activity of all its true friends to suppress in their birth, or before they gain strength to do further mischief. There is a description of men, I cannot say respectable, though many in number, who are for levelling all power and authority, who cry down all laws and subordination, who claim rights incompatible with society, under the specious title of the Rights of Man; and presume to assert that all mankind should be equal, without any regard to distinction whatever. These are high sounding words (for arguments they are not) to tingle in the ears of the weak and ignorant, to gain over the voice of the multitude on their side, on which only they depend for the credit and reception of their doctrines. For all men of sense and reflexion must know that Equality amongst men in a social state is a contradiction to plain reason and constant experience, it does not exist in the least civilized states and kingdoms, or even amongst savages in the most distant regions.

THIS Equality was not designed, and is not to be found in any part of the Creation. In the Heavens above "*one star differeth from another star in glory*;" look upon the earth and you cannot but perceive the different qualities and gradations which God has bestowed on all created beings, which, though they excell and vary from each other in particular properties, yet in the whole they compose a most beautiful and regular system! Thus we see the Lion the King of the Forest; the patient Ox destined for the food and labour of man; the Horse excelling in strength and swiftness; tame and wild animals of every description, all kept within their limited spheres, by the instinct which directs them! The same gradation is to be observed among the inhabitants of the waters, from the Leviathan or Whale down to those of the smallest size and apparent insignificance. The same useful inequality is observable in the vegetable system, where the lofty Oak lifts up its head on high, spreads itself far and wide, and the humble shrub flourishes under its shade. This must convince us that every thing in nature has its part allotted which it is destined to act. Why then should Man who may ex-

cell or be excelled by his fellow creatures, in symmetry, strength, activity, valour or mental abilities, be the only restless creature, impatient of controul and wishing to leap over those bounds which Providence has prescribed him? But with all our attempts, we cannot possibly counteract or overthrow the determined Will of our Creator; there ever will be the different orders and descriptions amongst us of wise and foolish, high and low, rich and poor, it has been so from the earliest ages of the world and must continue so.

IF all were rich or possessed an equal share of wealth; who would supply them with the common necessaries of life, with food and raiment? The truth is, a state of subordination is not only evidently designed by our Creator, but would arise from natural causes; many who are born poor might become rich, and those who abound in riches might squander them away and thus become necessitous. For every man's experience tells him that wealth is to be consumed by extravagance, or acquired by care and diligence. We must further observe that in all societies, whether great or small, one man shall excell another and possess a superi-

6rity which the other does not, or cannot attain in the pursuits of knowledge or virtue : with such talents he must rise in the world, and leave his former equals behind him : so that in fact, the inclinations of men must be the same and their abilities equal, for a state of equality to take place in their outward conditions ; when conceited Philosophy therefore would teach us we are all equal, common sense so flatly contradicts it, that we cannot but attribute such speculations to the pride and self-interest of crafty and seditious men, who would sow the seeds of discord amongst us, and when we had done their business for them, and ruined ourselves by our follies and dissentions, would laugh us to scorn for our credulity.

SUCH principles, if put into practice, must in the end overturn all government, and mankind like savages, would prey upon each other. The first great object to us is the security of our persons, our properties, and lives : these blessings we enjoy in their fullest extent, under our present Constitution ; but when once we shall have levelled all distinction, when we shall have degraded and brought low all men of rank, property, wisdom and experience, we shall then

let loose the strong to crush the weak, and under an imaginary state of equality and independence, not dreading any punishment for our crimes, this Happy Island will quickly become a scene of universal Tumult, Horror, and Bloodshed.

WHEN the *lower orders* of the people hear of a reform, they are unfortunately too well pleased with the sound, and without the capacity of judging whether it will be to their advantage or not, are hurried away to wish for and promote it: they immediately feel wants which they did not think of before, and are transported with the idea that they are soon to be supplied, that great and small are to be equal, and all enjoy the same privileges. This notion (and no wonder it should) intoxicates their minds and debauches their principles, to such a degree, that they overlook the many and solid advantages they possess under their present establishment, nor ever consider that the mischiefs they are thus ready to bring on the heads of their superiors, must at last fall with greater weight upon their own,---“*a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand* ;” and all the members, whatever their ranks and situations,

must fall with it, when once the Laws have lost their force, when Justice becomes weak and unsupported, and every man can do with impunity *what is right in his own eyes*; then farewell happiness, peace, and safety! farewell that freedom and all the other blessings we have hitherto enjoyed beyond any nation upon earth! Nothing remains for us but the cruel mortification of seeing that they have been torn from us by the envy and ill will of our enemies, by the artful and pernicious doctrines they have propagated, and by our own blindness in falling into the snare they have so privily set for us.

THIS I am persuaded of my Countrymen, if they could search into the secret plots which are hatched at home and abroad against us, if they could be made acquainted with the dark conspiracies and treacherous Cabals which are weekly and daily held in different parts of this kingdom, if they could but see the men who compose these assemblies, and thus discover the fountain head from which all our disturbances flow, their generous spirits would fire like that of Britons, and rise by a natural impulse, in the defence of their Constitution, to

the total overthrow of its pretended Friends, but bitterest Enemies: let it not then be said that thro' our own fault and negligence we have put it into their power thus to succeed, but explode (as the sensible of us must see through it) the fallacy of those wild Opinions which have lately been started to disturb our Peace. I only ask my countrymen in general to make use of common sense and reason, and under their direction all will end well: as for the lowest orders of them, they may be assured that whenever the distinctions amongst the Subjects of this Realm shall be confounded, their own ruin is at hand: let them consider that as the wants of the highest orders of men increase, so likewise must the distresses of the lowest: for from what sources then can be supplied the innumerable charities founded in this kingdom, for the sick, the lame, and the blind? Who will be enabled to give their alms to the aged, the widow, the orphan and the helpless of every denomination, who now partake of such bounty, given with a feeling heart and liberal hand, at the expence of many millions every year.

BUT I fear that the hopes of Plunder and Rapine is one grand motive with many who join

in the popular cry of Reformation, at least it is so with the leaders and promoters of it. Such would do well to consider, that any man who by violence may rob another of his possessions, subjects his own property to the same chance of depredation. This consideration alone, I should think sufficient to convince every man, who has a shilling to lose, or a bed to rest upon, of the danger and absurdity of all Levelling Principles : but if this will not do, the strongest of all reasons still remains to deter them; I mean the Penalties annexed to murder, theft, and rapine, by forfeiture of Life in this world, and the still more tremendous Punishments denounced against the commission of them, in the world to come.

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